



Youth in the Great Outdoors

Pacific Region Fishery Resources Tribal Youth Program

Educating, Engaging, and Employing Tribal Youth in the Pacific Region



(Credit: Mike Bisbee, Nez Perce Tribe)

Idaho's Seth Oatman (above) can credit his 2011 summer job to a Native American Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program started by the Service in the desert Southwest before he was born. Oatman was one of 17 Nez Perce Tribe high school and college students who worked last year on two of the first-ever Pacific Region Fishery Resources Tribal Youth projects: the Clearwater River Coho Restoration/Tribal Fisheries Intern Development Program, and the Youth Cultural Enrichment Academy.

Native American Youth Conservation Corps

For over 20 years, the Service Fisheries Program Native American YCC program has enhanced the lives of tribal youth. At existing YCCs in New Mexico with the Mescalero Apache Tribe, Montana's Salish

Kootenai Tribe, and the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Arizona, students deliver on-the-ground conservation work on tribal lands which helps them gain knowledge on a vast range of conservation and environmental related issues, and exposes them to numerous opportunities that often guides their future education and career paths in the conservation arena. In 2011, funding was provided to the Service's Pacific Region to bring this successful program to the Pacific Northwest.



Service Native American YCC students receive science-based, on-the-job-related training.
(Credit: USFWS)

Getting Started

Using \$55,000 in seed funding from Service headquarters' Division of Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Conservation, the Pacific Region Fishery Resources Program partnered with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC).

The Service and CRITFC developed a competitive process, soliciting proposals for natural and cultural resource-oriented youth summer employment programs from CRITFC Member Tribes.

CRITFC selected two six-week projects in Idaho submitted by the Nez Perce. Staff at the Kooskia and Dworshak National Fish Hatcheries provided direct, on-the-ground support to the Coho Restoration Program, bolstered by \$10,000 in Pacific Region Youth and the Great Outdoors Initiative funding and Regional Office technical support.

Clearwater River Coho Restoration/ Tribal Fisheries Intern Development

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Dworshak National Fish Hatchery partnered with the Nez Perce Tribe who hired six youth through the Nez Perce's Clearwater River Coho Restoration/Tribal Fisheries Intern Development Program, a six-week program totaling 2,400 hours. All youth participated in fish culture activities such as feeding juvenile coho, Chinook, and steelhead, cleaning ponds, daily record keeping, and spawning fish.



Solo Greene, a Nez Perce student, inventorying adult spring Chinook salmon at Kooskia National Fish Hatchery (Credit: Mike Bisbee)



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The youth worked with Chinook and coho salmon along with steelhead and rainbow trout at both Dworshak National Fish Hatchery and Clearwater State Fish Hatchery. Mike Bisbee of the Nez Perce hired and worked with the six youth from the Tribe.

Recruitment efforts were made for all jobs by job announcements at area high schools.



Restoration efforts like those conducted by Tribal Fisheries Interns are bringing more coho salmon like this adult male back to Idaho's Clearwater Basin (Credit: USFWS)

Youth Cultural Enrichment Academy

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Twenty-five Nez Perce youth participated in this year's Youth Cultural Enrichment Academy. Service funding was leveraged with resources from the Nez Perce Tribal Education Fund, Potlatch Fund, and Bonneville Power Administration. Participants took Nez Perce Language each morning, then one of three classes (Math, Biology, or Communications), and after lunch studied Traditional Clothing, Foods,

or Music/Dance. YCEA participants received dual credit for their math, biology, and communications courses from Northwest Indian College.

Education

The summer focused on preparing for the "Tribal Canoe Journey" where the youth showcased their culture to over 100 Tribal Nations through Nez Perce Language speeches, traditional dances, and singing songs over 100 years old. Seventy-five percent of the youth signed up for the Academy did not know too much of the Nez Perce language, did not know any songs or dances, and did not own any ceremonial regalia.



Nez Perce YCEA participants gained valuable educational, employment, and cultural opportunities (Credit: Nez Perce Tribe)

Engagement

At the culmination of the Academy program, YCEA participants travelled to the Tribal Canoe Journey in La Conner, WA. The Journey is an annual event that began twenty years ago to revitalize Canoe culture. Tribal canoes from all over the world travel to a common destination within the Coast Salish territory. Seventy-eight canoes arrived on the beach of the

Swinomish Tribe Monday July, 25th, 2011. Among them were five Nez Perce youth pulling with the West Shore Canoe Family of the Lummi Nation.



Participating in the Tribal Canoe Journey was a highlight of the Service-supported YCEA program (Credit: Nez Perce Tribe)

Employment

Service resources supported three college interns between the ages of 21-39 that were hired to serve as mentors to work with the youth, and 12 high school students that learned and worked over 1,300 hours, receiving a weekly stipend based on attendance, and completing YCEA projects over the six week program.

"My son learned about leadership, independence, and traditional values."

Dorothy Sherwood, mother of YCEA participant AJ Wheeler.

Watch a video of the YCEA 2011 Canoe Journey produced by Nez Perce Tribe AmeriCorps volunteer Laura Conner:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E-R6L7qi5qQ&feature=related>



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